

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### EMPI - Clear Lake

#### South Dakota Manufacturing Extension Partnership

#### Lean Takes the Pain out of Production at Empi

##### Client Profile:

Empi is the leading distributor of electrical stimulation and other orthopedic products used for pain management, orthopedic rehabilitation, physical therapy, fitness and sport performance enhancement. They are committed to delivering positive patient outcomes and providing innovative products specifically designed to meet the needs of the patient and medical profession. Empi's products are effective and proven therapy devices that allow patients to continue treatment at home, resuming daily activities sooner with less pain and better function. The company is part of DJO Incorporated, the largest non-surgical orthopedic rehabilitation device company in the U.S. and among the largest globally. Empi employs 170 people at its facility in Clear Lake, South Dakota.

##### Situation:

Empi decided it was time to make some changes within their culture. Recent mergers and acquisitions raised the bar and motivated them to start looking at continuous improvement methods, simplification of processes and cost savings. Empi realized that if it were to compete in a global environment, they must establish a culture that would allow quick adjustments to customer demands. In essence, they needed to develop a Lean operation that would include employee involvement, automation of labor-intensive processes, and ensure their products were of the highest quality available. The company contacted the South Dakota Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Dakota MEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for help.

##### Solution:

Dakota MEP provided Lean training to 26 employees through their Lean Enterprise Certification Program. Four additional Empi employees have participated in the Lean 101 training. Dakota MEP facilitated kaizen events in SMT (Surface Mount Technology) changeover, packaging improvement, and most recently layout improvements in the electronics area. With Dakota MEP's assistance, inventory has been reduced by 35 percent, and changeover time for SMT was reduced by 62 percent.

##### Results:

- \* Improved gross margins by 3 to 4 percent.
- \* Reduced changeover time by 62 percent.
- \* Reduced lead time by 60 percent.
- \* Reduced travel time by 65 percent.

##### Testimonial:

"Dakota MEP became an important source to assist us in our education and changing the culture of our employees. The Lean training that our employees received re-ignited their enthusiasm for

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continually looking for better ways to do their job."

Marlin Bjerke, VP of Manufacturing